

N E R O,
Emperor of *Rome*,
A
T R A G E D Y.

As it is Acted at the
T H E A T R E S.

By NATHANAEL LEE, *Gent.*



L O N D O N:
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M D C C X X V.

W E R O

Emperor of Rome

A

RAGEDY

As is Acted at the

THEATRE

By Nathaniel Lee



LONDON:
Printed by W. Basset, at the Theatre.

MDCCLXXV



To the Right Honourable
The Earl of ROCHESTER.

My Lord,



O E T S for the most Part of their Dedications miss of their Design, which should be to please that Honourable Person, whose Protection they desire. For what Pleasure can a noble Spirit, whose Ingenuity equals its Height, receive from an exorbitant Praise and ill-tim'd Applause? Not that the severest Cyck should snarl at just Commendations and due encomiums; such as the Epistle of *Horace* to *Augustus*, *Pliny's* Panegyrick to *Trajan*; which sort of wonder'd Eloquence ought to be as grateful to a brave and elevated Mind as Adorations to the Deity. My Business waving Insinuation, is to pray, not to flatter; and I hope, I shall appear less troublesome to your Lordship under the Form of a Beggar, than that of a Flatterer. Your Protection and Favour implor'd by this humble Supplicant in the behalf of a civil Tyrant, at least one whom I have so represented,

presented, and for which I have been sufficiently censur'd, perhaps unjustly enough; since 'tis not impossible for a Man to love and hate, to be brave and bad. From the Criticks, whose Fury I dread those Kill-men, and more than *Jews*, I appeal to your Lordship, as the Saint did to *Cæsar*: To you whose Judgment vies Remark with your Grandeur who are as absolutely Lord of Wit, as those Prevailers are its Slaves: To you, who by excellent Reading and Conversation with the pleasantly Wise have justly limited the mighty Sallies of an overflowing Fancy; whose Sayings astonish the Censorious, and whose Writings are so exactly ingenious Princes treasure them in their Memory as Things divine. This is so far from Flattery and Untruth that it appears rather an impertinent kind of asserting what every Man knows; as if I should gravenly tell the World 'tis Day at Noon: Which I had rather another should be smil'd at for, than he who is in highest Truth and lowest Humility,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most Humble

and Obedient Servant,

N A T. L E E



PROLOGUE

Spoken by Mr. HAINES.



*GOOD Plays and perfect Sense as scarce are
grown,*

As civil Women in this damn'd leud Town.

Plain Sense is despicable as plain Clothes,

As English Hats, Bone-lace, or woollen Hose

'Tis your brisk Fool that is your Man of Note;

Under he goes, in the embroider'd Coat:

Such wenching Eyes, and Hands so prone to ruffle;

The genteel Fling, the Trip and modish Shuffle;

Salt Soul and Flame as gay as any Prince:

Thus Taggs and Silks make up your Men of Sense.

I'm told that some are present here to-day,

Who e're they see resolve to damn this Play,

How much wou'd Interest with Ill-Nature sway.

But Ladies, you, we hope, will prove more civil,

And charm these Wits that damn beyond the Devil;

Then let each Critick here, all Hell inherit,

You have Attractions that can lay a Spirit.

A bloody fatal Play you'll see to-night,

Now to God, 't has put me in a Fright.

The meanest Waiter huffs, looks big, and struts,

Gives Breast a Blow, then Hand on Hilt he puts;

'Tis a fine Age, a tearing thund'ring Age.

May Heav'n this Thund'ring does not crack the Stage:

This Play I like not now——

And yet for ought I know, it may be good,

But still I hate this Fighting, Wounds and Blood.

Why what the Devil have I to do with Honour?

At Heroes court her, I cry, Pox upon her;

Tragedies i' Gad to me sound odly,

Can no more be serious, than you godly.

A

Dramatis

Dramatis Personæ.

N E R O, Emperor of *Rome*.
Britannicus, true Heir of the Empire.
Petronius, *Nero's* Favourite.
Otho, Husband to *Poppea*.
Piso, her Brother.
Seneca, *Nero's* Tutor.
Drusillus,
Plautus,
Silvius,
Mirmilon, } Romans.

Poppea, *Otho's* Wife married to *Nero*.
Agrippina, the old Empress, Mother to *Nero*.
Octavia, *Nero's* first Wife, Sister of *Britannicus*.
Cyara, Princess of *Parthia*, Mistress of *Britannicus*.
Syllana, *Poppea's* Confident.
Roman Gladiators.
Caligula's Ghost.

S C E N E, *Rome*.

N E R O



N E R O,
Emperor of Rome.



A C T I. S C E N E I.

Otho, Sylvius, and Cyara, *disguis'd*.

SYLVIUS.



W H Y dost thou droop, and hang thy
pensive Head,
As if there were no End of thy Distress?
His Sighs more frequent than the Mi-
nutes are;
Tears hang upon his Cheeks like Morn-
ing Dews

On Roses: Yet I cannot blame thy Grief,

R Otho. Sir, you amaze me with your sad Relation.
That fatal Night Prince *Alexander* fell,
and some more, were in our General's Tent,
Great *Corbulus* he's call'd) who with Success,
has often led our gallant *Roman* Troops
against your *Parthian* Horse; as I remember,

'Twas Midnight when our Scouts, all pale with Fear,
 Came, flying with the News of your Approach :
 Our General undisturb'd, strait gave Command
 That every Captain should his Charge perform,
 With as much Silence as was possible ;
 No Drums, no Trumpets sounded, all was hush'd ;
 Order in Whispers, was by all receiv'd :
 So your Surprize was answer'd with Surprize,
 And gain'd Advantage, without Victory ?
 For 'tis our Custom frequently to sleep
 Whole Nights in Arms, never to rest secure.

Cya. Our Loss, indeed, was great, but oh ! that Loss
 Of Losses, our dear Prince, surpasses all !
 For him, our Court now mourns ; Sorrow like Night,
 Eternal Night, spreads Horror all around ?
 All noble Hearts are cover'd with Despair ;
 For our bright Sun must never shine again.
 Some Dawn of Hope we had, he might be here
 A Pris'ner, and unknown ; but Fate decrees
 We shall not be so happy.

Oth. Sir, wherein
 My Service may prove beneficial,
 Or yield you any Comfort, pray command it.
 Captives of every Sort, as Time permit,
 I'll bring before you : if your Eye can read
 A Line, that is your Prince in any Face,
 Examine it to the full. Mean while, be pleas'd
 To take a strict Survey of all the Court,
 The greatest, and most flourishing on Earth.

Syl. So every Tongue reports it ; a full Orb
 Of matchless Glory, where your Emperor
 Rules like the Sun, and gives each noble Warmth.

Oth. Nothing appears alas, as heretofore ;
 The Darkness of his horrid Vices have
 Eclips'd the glimmering Rays of his frail Virtue.
 His Cruelties, like Birds of Prey, have pick'd
 All Seeds of Nobleness from his false Heart ;
 And now it lies a sad dull Lump of Earth,
 Impatient of wise Counsel and Reproof.
 To-day he dooms his Mother to be slain ;
 Swears, that she plots against his Crown, and Life :

Nero, Emperor of Rome

11

sentence is past, and the poor Queen's betray'd.
See where she comes.

Emperor, Octavia, Britannicus, Seneca, Drusillus, Piso, and Plautus : Agrippina, led by two Virgins, all in white, a Dagger, and a Bowl of Poison carry'd before her : Courtiers and Guards following. Britannicus kneels.

Cya. O *Sylvius*, I am lost ! there, there he kneels ;
My Flames increase, my Soul new Passions feels.
My Flight from *Parthia* I'll no more regard ;
All was too little for so great Reward.

Ner. To me ?

Plau. Dread Sir, the Prince *Britannicus*.

Ner. Say you ?

Plau. He kneels.

Ner. Sir, wou'd ye ought with me ?

Brit. Not for my self, but for the Queen, thus low
I fall, and beg you wou'd some Pity shew.

Cast from your Breast this rank and pois'nous Hate :

Alas, how many do repent too late ?

In Acts of Love, Kings are best understood ;

Hell makes some great ; 'tis God-like to be good.

It is your Mother ———

Oh that that sacred Name should not avert

Your Wrath ! nor, with its Softness melt your Heart !

Your Mother 'tis, whom you command to bleed ;

What will the cens'ring World think of this Deed ?

Ner. Why, let it think : If Asses bray, must I
Regard ? I say again, that she shall die.

Why is she not to Execution led ?

She's plotting now. *Drusillus*, see her dead.

Sen. If for the Guilty we to Heaven may pray,

Can you the Innocent ———

Ner. Old Fool, away,

Brit. Justice is robb'd, his Sword and Scales you move ;
Sweet Mercy starts, and striking flies above,

Where, to the Gods, such horrid Tales of you

She does relate, as they can scarce think true :

Nate trembles, as she writes 'em in her Book ;

Se Ev'n *Jove*, with Horror of this Fact, is shook.

New point his Thunder, brandishes i'th' Air
Dread Lightning, and with *Rome* intends a War.

Ner. Let him begin; my Purpose I'll maintain,
Tho' he should scorching Showers of Sulphur rain.
Tho' he stood near,

And from some neighbouring Cloud, did hurl down Fire,
With fresh Recruits of Men his Arm I'd tire,
And she at last shou'd spite of him expire.
Would he were here, to end the grand Debate:
But why with you do I capitulate?
My Word's an Oracle, and stands her Fate.

Ota. Ah *Cæsar*, if you can thus cruel prove
To her, and lay aside all filial Love,
What must I then expect, who am your Wife,
But that you shortly too should take my Life?
By all the Pleasures of your Marriage-bed——

Ner. I swear, speak one Word more, and thou art dead.

Brit. Tyrant, this must not be, while I draw Breath.

Ner. Then thou dy'st too.

Brit. Lo, thus I brave my Death.

Ner. Ha! does he smile!

By all the Gods. I'll quickly change your Mirth;
With my own Hand I'll cut thee from the Earth.

Oth. Dread Sir——

Ner. Was ever such an Insolence?

Brit. Sir, what I did was in my own Defence.
When e'er I rise against your sacred Head
In Thought, may Loads of Thunder strike me dead.
You are my Master, and *Rome's* Emperor;
May you live long, and make right use of Pow'r.

Cya. Guard him you Gods, and save his Innocence.

Ner. So Sir: Yet she shall die. Go, take her hence.

Ota. Oh, how my tender Heart does sympathize!
Grief strikes me dumb, and Pity fills my Eyes.

Agr. Thou savage Monster, Seed of Rocks, more wild,
More wild than the fierce Tygres of her young beguil'd,
Barbarian! who in some dark Cave wert bred,
Made drunk with Poison, with Corruption fed,
Offspring of Hell! But, oh, my lab'ring Mind
Cannot get vent, nor fit Expressions find,
Why was I made so strong? Oh my accurst!
Grief swells me up, and yet I cannot burst,

Ner.

Ner. Why should she thus in Torments here remain?
Pity her; go put her out of Pain.

Ag. Tyrant, wherein have I deserv'd this base
And barbarous Usage? — Oh my foul Disgrace!

Ha! shall I tell it to the World or die,
And in my Urn let all in Silence lie?
My Soul doth struggle with its Load of Woes;
Woes much more horrid than those painful Throes,
My Body felt when first I brought to light
This cursed Son, now Basilisk, to fight.

Ner. Am I to be obey'd? How dare you stay?
Furies and Hell! be gone, take her away.

Ag. Oh, stay awhile, e're yet I lose my Breath,
Hear my last Words, more dreadful than my Death.
Bear me some winged God, and fix me high
On some tall Pyramid, that hits the Sky;
Place all the World on the vast Rounds below,
And make my Voice so loud, that all may know:
This Monster, under *Tyrian* Purple hid,
Did force a Passage to his Mother's Bed.

Where are thy dreadful Bolts? (to *Jove* I call)
Strike him, or me, amiss they cannot fall.
O horrid Fact to tell! it wounds my Ear:
The Day and Night together mingled were.

Monster of Men, who alter'd Nature's Course,
The Stream ran backwards and found out the Source.

Ner. The Beldam raves; *Drusillus*, take her hence,
All this is forg'd; Heaven knows my Innocence.

A Moment's Respite I will not afford,
But when she's dead, let *Otho* bring me word.

[*Exeunt severally Nero and Agrip.*]

Manent Piso, Plautus, and Mirmilon.

Pis. Very well. Harke ye, Gentlemen, may we talk?

Plau. Treason? No.

Pis. Then I'll hold my Peace.

Mir. Faith, I know not, but there was a Stranger here
yesterday hang'd for looking suspiciously.

Pis. Very good; 'twas an excellent Memorandum,
therefore I'll shut my Eyes, and not look at all, or here-
after always in Company wear a Masque.

Plau. Not so, Sir, if you tender your Safety ; such Reservation argues Thoughtfulness. Now the Emperor can't endure a Man that's given to Meditation ; hates a Philosopher as much as he loves a Fidler : *Seneca*, to my Knowledge is a Burden to him ; in my hearing he call'd him crazy Caterpillar, and venerable Rook-worm.

Mir. Right *Plautus* : Therefore, *Piso*, be not thoughtful ; 'tis dangerous. A Friend of mine (hark ye) this Morning, by the Emperor's Order, had his Throat cut for being thoughtful.

Pis. The good Empress——

Plaut. How, Sir ?

Pis. Well, the Empress then. Alas, how sudden, from the Top of Glory——

Mir. Alas ! do you pity her then ?

Pis. I, Sir ? Greatness and Goodness are——

Plau. What Sir ?

Pis. I know not, nor where, unless in the other World.

Mir. You weep, *Piso*, have a Care, a Sort of liquid Treason.

Pis. 'Twas your Hair hit my Eye, and caused this Rheum. I'll to the Country again. Farewel, Gentlemen. Long live the Emperor ! that's no Treason.

Mir. No, Sir, no. Adieu, good *Piso*. He wears an honest Heart.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, The Court.

Nero, Otho, Seneca, Drusillus, &c. Agrippina dead.

Oth. She is, as you would have her, Sir, no more :
See where she lies, all stain'd with her own Gore.
She said an antient Man bid her beware
Of ever seeing you made Emperor :
For you, at last, would cause her to be slain :
Then let me die, she said, so he may reign.

Ner. How wisely then did I her Death decree !
For 'twould have been a great Impiety
To let her live, and mar the Prophecy.

Oth.

Oth. Choice of two Deaths, by your Command we gave,
But she cry'd both ; a double Death I'll have :

One pois'nous Drop for Heaven I would not sell ;

Each Drop will sink his Soul more deep in Hell.

In her right Hand the Dagger she did hold :

And with her left she heav'd the fatal Gold,

And drunk the Venom off : That being done,

Deep in her Breast the keen Stiletto run :

With many Wounds she made her Bosom gay ;

Her Wounds like Flood-gates did themselves display,

Thro' which Life ran in Scarlet Streams away,

Ner. Remove her hence. My Soul now free does walk,

And shall no more be clogg'd with moral Talk.

My Statue shall be made of lasting Steel ;

Before it Lords of *Rome* shall humbly kneel,

Great *Julius* and *Augustus* you adore ;

And why not me who have their very Pow'r ?

To them you daily offer Sacrifice :

I am a God ; my self I canonize.

Sen. 'Mongst Gods their Glory shines now they are gone,

Because with us, like Stars their Virtues shone.

Ner. Virtue's a Name ; Religion is a Thing

Bitter to scare poor Priests than daunt a King.

Swift, as quick Thought, thro' every Art I range :

Who but a God like me, could Sexes change ?

Jorus, be Witness of my mighty Art ;

Jorus, now Lady, once Lord of my Heart.

At my Command the fragrant Winds do blow,

The willing Floods in Waves of Balsam flow :

This Hand does all the Sweets of Nature sow ;

I rack Nature ; all its Treasures view ;

Beings annihilate, and make anew,

All this can I, your God-like *Nero* do.

Sen. What Fiend is this, which in his Breast, unspy'd,

Bears up his Soul on such large Wings of Pride ?

Let me not die for speaking what is true :

All this you would, but, alas ! cannot do.

Ner. Ha !

Sen. If you do well, and noble Acts atchieve,

When'er you die all honest Hearts will grieve ;

Each *Roman* will to After-Ages tell,

How good, how great, how excellent you fell ;

What Pity 'twas that you should die so young !
 Thus shall your Honour sound from every Tongue :
 But tho' your Fame survive, your Body must
 Rot, and be crumbled into common Dust.
 Each Grain of which, because you once did reign,
 Will not turn Gold, nor any Lustre gain :
 Yours, and the Beggar's Dust alike must pass,
 Instead of Sand, to fill Time's Hour-glass.

Ner. Gown-man, thou ly'st——
 The World's eternal, and its Monarchy I :
 Then how is't possible for me to die,
 Yet give me Creaturc Immortality ?
 If when I leave this World, Men shou'd debate
 The Manner ; say, I did my self translate.
 The Glory of my Godhead I will shrowd
 Not in a Mantle, but in a perfum'd Cloud.
 In Smoak of Incense I will mount above,
 And in his Throne, take the right Hand of *Jove*.

Sen. O murd'ring Pride, thou dost all Reason kill !
 You will have Altars too ?

Ner. Yes, Slave, I will ;
 Altars of Gold, in Crystal Temples built :
 No Blood of Bulls, nor Goats, shall there be spilt ;
 Such coarse rank Smoak may sooty *Vulcan* please,
Pluto, or horned *Pan* ; dull Deities !
 The best of human Gore shall wash my Shrine ;
Neroes shall bleed, and they are half Divine.
 In Cases made of Diamond entire,
 Stars shall instead of Lamps lend their bright Fire.
 Each common God shall, in his turn, be Priest,
 And for your lower World make his Request :
 Then offer up a grateful Sacrifice,
 Kings Heads, Queens Hearts, and charming Virgins Eyes

Enter Petronius.

Sen. O Heaven ! his Blasphemies no Limit have ;
 His brutish Impudence our Gods does brave :
 Withour Controul he does their Power defy,
 And I, like Midnight hush'd, stand trembling by.
 I'll speak, altho' he blast me with his Breath ;
 Repentance too may win him for my Death,
 Dread Sir, if you would please.——

Ner. Fond Preacher, hence :

Gods ! can I still endure his Insolence ?

Guards, seize him ; go, let him in Prison howl,
And solace there his melancholy Soul.

[Exit Otho, Seneca, and Guards.]

But, dear *Petronius*, how shall I requite
Thee, who sole Author art of my Delight ?
When my Heart sickens, thou still bring'st me Ease,
And dost my Fancy with new Objects please.

Pet. To sooth your Soul, ruffled with this late Storm,
My Care found out so sweet, so rare a Form,
So full of blooming Graces in each Part,
As well deserves the Conquest of your Heart.

Not Purple Violets i'th' early Spring,
Such grateful Sweets, such tender Beauties bring.
The Orient Blush which does her Cheeks adorn,
Makes Coral pale, vies with the rosy Morn.

Not *Venus*, sprung from the Sea's snowy Foam,
Neptune's bright Seed, her Whiteness can o'ercome.

Cupid has took a Surfeit from her Eyes ;
When e'er she smiles, in lambent Fire he fries ;
And when she weeps, in Pearls dissolv'd he dies.

Ner. Hold, hold ; I'm o'ercharg'd with this Excess ;
Thy Deeds are great, but make thy boasting less :
What is her Name, and where does she lie hid ?

Pet. She is the Partner of Lord *Otho's* Bed,
Poppea named. With Gold I brib'd her Maid,
For which the easy Slave her Trust betray'd.
Not far from *Rome* this Beauty does reside ;
Chaste she is thought, because yet never try'd.
Her quick black Eye does wander with Desire,
And if I judge aright, bears wanton Fire.

Oft, as *Syllana* told me when to Court
Her Lord was gone, eager of unknown Sport ;
She sigh'd, and in her Bosom hid her Face,
And with fierce Action would the Wench embrace,
Dress'd like *Diana*, she in Woods is fear'd,
And gives swift Chace to all the savage Herd :
With Vigour masculine she rides along,
Her Quiver full of Shafis behind her hung ;

Her

18 Nero, *Emperor of Rome.*

Her Right-Hand holds a Dart, her Left a Bow;
Her long black Locks on her fair Shoulders flow,
As thick'ning Clouds o'er the Sun's Brightness grow.

Ner. Thou dear Procurer of my most lov'd Joys,
Fly, fly, the least Delay my Life destroys.
Now try thy Skill; this is indeed a Task:
Win her, and thou hast more than thou canst ask.

[*Exit Petronius.*]

Let phlegmatick dull Kings call Crowns their Care;
Mine is my Wanton, and does Beauties share
Above my Mistress' Eyes. On, *Nero*, on,
Spend thy vast Stock, and riot in thy Throne.
If there be Pleasure yet I have not found,
Name it, some God; 'tis mine, tho' under Ground:
No Nook of Hell shall hide it from thy Sight,
But I will conjure't into open Light.
My Scepter, like a charming Rod, shall raise
Such Sports as would old *Epicures* amaze;
Pleasures so rich, so various, and so new
As never yet the Gods, my great Forefathers, knew.

[*Exit.*]



ACT II. SCENE I.

Drusillus and a Roman.

DRUSILLUS.



Barbarous and horrid! O the raging Fiend,
When will his black Impieties have End?
The great, the wise, the worthy *Seneca*,
Is by this bloody Monster made away.
Poor City! whither are thy Founders fled,
To what low distant Regions of the Dead,
That at their Country's Call they will not rise,
And this ungovern'd Tyrant's Rage chastise?

R.

Ro. I saw the best and wisest of Mankind,
The Pilot of the Will, the Guide o'th' Mind,
Dying and pale ; from every gen'rous Vein
Safe Executioners his Life did drein :

By *Nero* kill'd, by *Nero* whom he lov'd,
Whose Youth by painful Studies he improv'd,
And warm'd so long the Viper in his Breast,
That the kind Host was poison'd by the Guest.

Druf. In vain we mourn : some noble *Roman* shou'd
Care to be glorious, dangerously good,
And kill this Tyrant ; kill him gorg'd with Wine,
Forcing a Day, and making black Night shine :
Debauch'd, and sordidly ambitious grown,
Midst all his Revels, would the Deed were done.

Ro. Guilt, the Mind's Wildfire, lick his Spirits up ;
Press him, good Gods, press him until he droop.
Sink, and be damn'd, beneath the lowest Hell ;
After his Death we may in Safety dwell.

Druf. But, while he lives, no honest *Roman* may
Pass Night in Rest, or view one peaceful Day. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *The Country.*

Otho, Poppea, Petronius, and Piso.

Pet. Why should such godlike Forms inhabit here,
And bless th' ignoble sort ?

Oth. Prithee, no more ;
She sha' not go to Court, there's Discord in't.

Pet. Now by your Lady's lovely Eyes I swear,
That Country sounds not half so well to me.

Is it more Harmony to hear a Clown
Whilst his dull Tunes, which you construe solemn,
Than see a Lady softly touch her Lute,
And breathe an Air to the melodious Strings ?
Her Beauty, and her Voice so ravishing,
That each Spectator's Soul is left in doubt
Where first to mount, into the Eye or Ear.

The Court's,
Now, by my Honour, dearer than my Life ;
And, as I Action love, I think the Court

May

May well be term'd the noble Rendezvous
Of gallant Spirits : 'tis a Circle, Sir.

Oth. More I'll allow, it is a golden Circle ;
But, like the *Carthaginian* Hero's King,
It carries Poison : 'tis a fatal Circle :
Upon whose Magick Skirts a thousand Devils
In crystal Forms sit tempting Innocence,
And beckon early Virtue from its Center.

Pis. Now, by my Life, I think you counsel ill.
I view thee, and o'th' sudden, something calls
Thee Traitor.

Brother, I never lov'd this Man ; that's all.

[*Exit*]

Pet. Why, should you lose me on a bare Suspicion
The Gods rain Curses on me thick as Hail,
If e'er I harbour'd in this Breast a Thought
But what was noble, of your spotly Loves.
I must be bold to say you've done me Wrong ;
And, but I have by Oath inviolable
Sworn you a Friendship firm as Destiny,
Protecting you and yours, I should not thus
Tamely put up your angry Brother's Terms.

Oth. Your Pardon, generous Friend, he was to blame.
Let my Repentance set all right again :
Indeed I am asham'd for what was past.

Pet. See, our Contention has disturb'd your Lady,
And call'd the precious Dew into her Eyes.

Oth. No more, my Dear : nay, if thou love me,
cease.

Pet. I wonder that the Emperor's so long !
I wrote to have him call *Otho* to Court,
Employ him there, and come in Person hither. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE III. The Court.

Octavia and Britannicus.

Oct. Ah ! dearest Brother ! be not too secure ;
Sirens most dreadful are when they allure ;
I dread him most, since your last noble Strife,
And fear he is plotting 'gainst your precious Life,
Of which you ought to have a tender Care,
Because your Sister claims so deep a Share :

For, hear me, Gods, the Doom which you decree
This gallant Prince, shall prove my Destiny.

Brit. Fear not my Life; he cannot be so base:
I have some Friends that all his Mischiefs trace;
If ought against me move, their Care will find
Some Means to let me know what is design'd.

Os. Heaven ever shield you from his Violence;
His Kindness to you is but meer Pretence,
And if he smiles, 'tis at your Innocence.
The Crystal of his Eye is clouded o'er,
That his dark Thoughts my Genius can't explore.
E'er while I met him,

The Fates sit working on his gather'd Brows;
Slow Steps he takes, and murmurs as he goes,
Starts, and fix'd Looks upon the Terras throws.

Brit. Mild as calm Martyrs, I could Death receive;
Two Reasons only make me wish to live:
Two Debts remain to pay, most nobly due;
Love claims the first, t'other I owe to you.

Os. Within your Breast does Love chief Regent
stand?

I thought that Reason there had sole Command.

Brit. Never was Heart so pitifully kind,

So capable of Love's Impression made.

With me all Beauties gentle Usage find;

The humble charm, the mighty to invade.

Last Year, unknown to *Parthia* I did go,

And view'd the Court; beheld the gallant Foe

Of *Rome*, Prince *Alamander*, whose great Name

Sounds loud, and almost cracks the Cheeks of Fame.

Bellona then, as Goddess of our Arms,

I did adore; but soon felt softer Charms:

The curious Prince within my Looks did find

Something that wrought upon his noble Mind,

Discours'd me, call'd me Friend, and did confess

He never lov'd a Man to such Excess.

One Day, (Oh Day most fatal to my Rest!)

After a thousand Kindnesses express,

He took me by the Hand, and gently said,

Dear Friend, there is a young and noble Maid

That fain would see you. Bowing, I replied,

Sir, I am yours, and to your Service tied.

Os.

22 Nero, *Emperor of Rome.*

Os. Your Story yet has no great Cause to fright.

Brit. At length we came; but such a glorious Sight,
Such a bright Flux of Rays on tender Sense,
Such charming Softness, such sweet Excellence,
Words may describe, but never can define;
The Sun ne'er saw an Object so divine;
Fancy can't teach it; above Fiction fair;
All the sweet Lines of Beauty center'd there.
Unlike to *Cæsar's* was my am'rous Doom,
I came, I saw, but was myself o'ercome.
It was his Sister,
Cyara nam'd, that Royal charming Maid;
My Soul was wrapt with Joy, tho' shook with Dread,
So Angels when they stoop to mortal fight,
Strike us with Awe, yet ravish with Delight.

Os. Why did you not your noble Love declare?

Brit. I did; but first committed to her Ear
The Secret of my Birth, which he receiv'd
With modest Joy, and generously believ'd:
Our Loves too happy were to flourish long;
Frost-nipt i'th' Bud, they wither'd as they hung.
Some *Roman* Slave, I know not whom nor where,
Gave the old King private Intelligence;
But the young Prince most watchful sent me Word,
Hasten'd my Flight, and would not Time afford
To hear my Thanks, ungrateful so I came
To *Rome*, but nourish'd still my former Flame:

*Enter Cyara and Sylvius at one Door, the Emperor
and Plautus at another.*

Cy. Yonder he stands, the Gods great Master-piece!
Oh, I could ever on that Object gaze,
And lose my Senses in that goodly Maze!
With gay and vig'rous Youth his Eyes are crown'd,
Presence and manly Graces all around
His noble Form, do make their bright Abode,
Like Beams of Lustre circling in a God.

Ner. He dies, that bold Comp'roller of my Will;
He has oblig'd me so, that I must kill.
Why with dull Thoughts do I my Fancy pall?
When I look sad, whoie Hecatombs should fall.

Ha!

Ha! who are they? My fretting Blood does rise:
Hands rest, I'll try to blast him with my Eyes:
Wake me a Basilisk but one short Hour,
Some God that would be *Nero's* Emperor.

Plaut. O ye just Powers! where is *Astrea* fled?
Foul Vice triumphs, trampling on Virtue's Head,
Here fam'd *Democritus* his Teeth might show,
And *Heraclitus* might his Tears bestow.

Ner. I hate him deadly,
As Poverty, Diseases, or old Age;
For his wish'd Death, my Empire I'll engage.
Not Hell nor Heaven my fierce Resolves shall daunt:
First I will act; and then I'll think upon't.

Octavia, follow me, [Exeunt ambo.]

Brit. What does he mean?
He frowns on me, and smiles upon the Queen,
These ruddy Drops some say ill Omens are;
Gods be my Guard, but 'tis not worth my Care.
I bleed within; there, there's the mortal Wound,
For which no Cure, no Balsam can be found.
In Dreams, *Cyara*, I behold thy Charms,
With fix'd Imagination of high Pleasure;
Thy beauteous Form shall flow into my Arms,
And I embrace it as a real Treasure. [Exit.]

Cy. How dull this Place appears now he is gone!
Night's Emblem, it bemoans the absent Sun.

Sylw. Madam, 'tis fit you should discover now;
Put off the Cloud, and fair *Cyara* show.

Cy. Ere I reveal myself, his Love I'll try.

Sylw. You doubt him.

Cy. No, it is Curiosity. [Exeunt.]

Nero and Octavia.

Ner. Your Sentence dooms me to be curst or blest;
Can you deny me? 'tis my first Request:
All Things are easy to a willing Mind;
Tis quickly done, if you will prove but kind.

Oct. My Soul doth with convulsive Horror shake;
Name it again, for sure I did mistake.

Ner. That you the Prince your Brother's Blood would
spill;

No Matter how, so you but swear to kill.

Here

24 Nero, *Emperor of Rome.*

Here with my Dagger let the Deed be done :
You often find him sleeping and alone.

OÆ. Sleeping ! Oh Gods ! Can you your Vengeance
keep ?

Where is your Thunder ? No, 'tis you that sleep :
Sure else your Justice would his Vice confound,
And drive this Monster quick into the Ground.
Hell to his Soul such Impudence has given,
That he in time will storm your Fort of Heaven :
In Blasphemies his Spirits do' exhale ;
Your high bright Walls his Giant Crimes will scale.
Oh, my Heart's full.

Ner. Here's that will give it Vent : [Stabs her]

So now go tell the Gods my black Intent.

Britannicus his Death I will defer !

'Tis pretty well I've made an end of her.

Now I will haste to meet *Poppea's* Arms :

Oh, Love, assist me with thy mighty Charms,

And I will raise thy wanton Altars higher ;

Old Men and Eunuchs shall in Heaps expire,

Because incapable of thy soft Fire.

This Day my fatal Brow no Clouds shall wear ;

Till I return, *Rome*, lay aside thy Fear ;

I and the Gods of Wit smile once a Year. [Exit.]

OÆ. Oh, my *Britannicus*, my Brother ! Oh,

Might I but see thee once, yet ere I go,

And wander in the wide dark Dens of Death :

But, oh ! my Soul is almost out of Breath.

Enter Britannicus.

Brit. He sent me here ; for what I can't devise.

OÆ. Ah me ! look here, with Pity glut thy Eyes.

Now I am well : for thy sake I would live.

My dear, my gentle Brother, do not grieve.

Brit. Gods ! Gods ! But they are deaf, or will not
hear.

No Hopes of Life ? Oh my prophetick Fear !

Sigh Heart, weep Eyes, I draw each crystal Spring ;

But 'tis my Blood must be thy Offering.

OÆ. Hold, hold ; *Cyara*, 'tis *Cyara's* Call :

My Share I give to her, she claims you all,

Give

Give me your Sword ; so now I've lost my Fears :
 You weep too much, and yet I love those Tears ;
 'Twas a gen'rous Proffer, 'twas indeed
 Upon thy Bosom let me rest my Head ;
 'Tis a soft Pillow, sweetly now I rest,
 And sigh my Soul into thy gentle Breast. [*Dist.*
Brit. O stay, my Dear, my most lov'd Sister, stay ;
 But one Word more. Her Soul is on its Way :
 She's gone, she's gone ; thou flow'ry Sweet farewell.
 Oh where, to whom shall I my Sorrows tell !
 In every Grove and melancholy Bower
 Thy sad untimely Loss I will deplore ;
 Thy Name's dear Character each Tree shall bear,
 On every Letter I will drop a Tear.
 How quickly Fate our fairest Hopes beguiles !
 Oh, thou short Solace of my many Ills,
 Adieu ! Adieu, my Star, my dearest Light !
 Now thou art gone, I am all dark, all Night ;
 One Lump I grow, and know not how I move,
 All sad and gloomy, as the Eyes of Love.
 Trust me, thy Sweetness I shall ne'er forget ;
 Off with my Sorrows on thy Tomb I'll sit,
 Till I at last into cold Marble turn,
 And with my pious Figure grace thy Urn. [*Exit.*



ACT III. SCENE I.

Britannicus with a Boy.

BRITANNICUS.

HAT is the Earth to me ? Why do I stay,
 Since thou, my Joy, my dear *Octavia*,
 Art ravish'd hence ? To *Parthia* I will fly,
 And in thy Presence, fair *Cyara*, die :
 My only Comforts on thy Truth depend ;
 Thou art chang'd, my Grief shall have an End.
 Give me the Song without.

SONG.

SONG.

*W*E E P, weep, ye *Muses*, drein the Springs,
 Such Notes go warble to the Strings,
 Such Dirges as the Ravens sound
 When Ghosts run trembling thro' the Ground:
 The fairest of her Sex is dead,
 Her tender Limbs are wrapp'd in Lead;
 Her Eyes, Stars Envy, the Earth's Pride,
 The broad black Hand of Death does hide:
 In Death's dark Chamber now she lies,
 Pale as the Snow, and cold as Ice.

CHORUS.

The Grave, the lovely Grave will bring us Ease,
 There shall we sleep in downy Peace;
 There no Distractions nor Jealousies be,
 But all from inordinate Passions are free:
 The cold Tomb is free from hot Love and Desire;
 It has Ashes good store, but admits of no Fire:
 There Men do never groan, nor Women cry,
 But all Things hush'd, in solemn Silence lie.

Brit. Enough, enough. Oh, my sick Heart, not yet
 Break, break, for Shame, let Nature have her Debt.

Cyara and Sylvius.

Cy. Withdraw, good *Sylvius*. How sad he looks!
 Was ever Man so goodly? Oh my Heart
 Bear up! And yet I dare not speak to him.
 If there be any Charms in Womens Tongues,
 If there be any Words that can infuse
 Soft Love into a Bosom, and create
 A gentle Passion, good Heaven grant it me;
 Sir, may I interrupt without Offence
 Your serious Thoughts? I've something to relate
 Which is your near Concern.

Brit. Mine, pretty Sir?

ay on, I hear you. What would his Business be?

Cy. 'Tis from a Lady who made me her Agent,

A sorry one I fear, and much unable

To tell what she commanded me; a Story

So lamentable that I cannot think on't,

But streight my Eyes o'erflow with Tears. Pardon me,

Only a little Respite, I'll go on.

Brit. Thou raisest something in me, which as yet

I cannot give a Name to. What can this mean?

Cy. *Cyara*, Sir, the *Parthian* Princess —

Brit. Ha!

Com'st thou from her? A thousand Blessings on thee.

Cy. A thousand Curses rather, for my News.

My Name's *Coralbo*, her unhappy Kinsman:

To my poor Faith she did the mighty Honour

Of telling the sad Stories of your Loves.

It was her Chance, a dismal Chance indeed,

That Day you fled, as she was sitting at

The Palace-Window, striking of her Lute,

Thoughtful, and Virgin-like, alone, to cast

Her Eye upon your Person; strait she blush'd,

Wond'ring to see you in that Equipage:

But soon her Brother did unriddle all:

Amazement seiz'd her first; but when the Prince

Was gone, she loos'd the Reins Grief had full stopt:

She trembled, fetch'd heart-breaking Sighs,

As if her Eyes were Springs; she made Complaints

So languishing, and with so sad an Accent,

Wonder that it kill'd her not till now.

Brit. I hope you come not to abuse me.

By Heaven, if you do —

Cy. Indeed I do not:

Let that convince you, if you know her Hand.

Find he's noble, his Looks are chang'd o'th' sudden:

Fear I've gone too far. How do you, Sir?

Brit. Well, Boy. O Gods! Devils! Hell, Heaven,

and Earth!

Reads. *If in the other World I can behold ought there,*

will be You; pray love my Memory: 'Twill be a Sa-

tisfaction above the Thoughts of Paradise to your dying

Cyara.

I feel

28 Nero, *Emperor of Rome.*

I feel a mortal trembling shoot along

My Arteries : I'm cold. *Octavia!* *Cyara!* Oh! [*Falls*]

Cy. Help, help : My Lord, *Cyara* lives ; return.

What have I done ? Upon thy dying Lips

I'll print my Soul, but I'll bring back thy Life.

Fool that I was, for a Fancy, thus

To play away that Pearl, for which I would

Have sold my Breath, my vital Spirits, my All.

O, he returns. *Cyara* is not dead :

Look up, my Lord ; do you not know this Face ?

Brit. *Cyara!* Heavens, 'tis she ! Thou charming Fair

How am I ravish'd with thy glorious Presence ?

O, who would live on Earth, sultry and hot,

Under a Load of Care, did he once taste

The Pleasures of these cool immortal Shades ?

O the refreshing Sweets which the Winds blow

From ever budding Flowers eternal Spring !

Cy. Where, Sir ?

Brit. Why, here in blest *Elysium*.

Cy. O he is lost, distracted !

Brit. Look, look, my Dear, prithee let's walk along

The Grass does shine with pure Emerald Green,

Each purling Brook like liquid Plate appears,

And every Pebble seems a Diamond ;

Tall burnish'd Trees with Fruit of massy Gold,

Upon whose Boughs all fair and heavenly Forms

Sit sweetly warbling to their Loves below.

See yonder's *Octavia*, my Sister, look,

Pale and forlorn, in a close gloomy Shade,

Her airy Substance thus I will condense,

And squeeze to Water, 'cause I cannot weep.

Cy. Ah Prince ! *Cyara* lives, and I am she.

Brit. Thou art a lying Boy : O Gods, my Head !

Cy. Do you not know me, Sir ? Look wisely on me

Brit. *Cyara's* Picture ; just such charming Eyes ;

Such snowy Hands, such Lips, such winning Smiles ;

Such Tenderness ; such was her every Grace :

But Oh ! you told a false, a fatal Tale,

The Accent of thy Voice is different,

She could not lie, for she was all Perfection :

All Beauty sickn'd when she left the World.

Cyara

Nero, *Emperor of Rome.* 29

Cyara. Oh thou fair one! glorious Saint,
thou couldst not die for me, desertless me.

Cy. She is not dead, but lives, and loves you, Sir.

Brit. Thou dost associate with Lawyers, sure,
And Travellers.

Cy. Who, I Sir? Why?

Brit. Because

Thou ly'st extremely, Boy. No, she is dead;
The Canopy of Heaven is hung with Sable;
The Sun, like a great Mourner, drives her Horse,
Wrapt round with Clouds; each Star withdraws
His golden Head, and burns within his Socket:

The whole Cope is dark, black, dismal,
And mourns the sudden Loss of fair *Cyara*.

Ha! though; yonder flies a Night-Raven,
In each black Eye there rolls a Pound of Jet.

See how he fans with his huge Wicker-Wings

The dusky Air. Come, Boy, be gone,

I'll save thee, tho I die myself; go in,

Run, run, I say, I'll fetch my Bow, and shoot him.

[*Exeunt,*

SCENE, *The Country.*

Petronius, and Poppea. Piso over-hearing.

Pop. I must not hear you, Sir.

Pet. Can you despise

A Flame whose matchless Splendor drowns the Stars,
And Lustre vies with the great Eye of Day?

O scrupulous Virtue, art thou grown so cold,

That the reflected Beams of doubled Honours,

Beating upon thee with incessant Glories,

Cannot approach thee thro thy Walls of Ice?

With all their fiery Points, cannot once pierce thee?

Pop. High Minds should not be tempted with Ap-
pearance,

Nor drawn to dangerous Courses from homely Cells,

Where honest Pleasures with safe Plenty dwells.

Pet. But what Converse, what Nobleness is here

To deck your Thoughts, that claim a vaster Sphere?

Thro' all the Heaven they should, like Eagles, roam,

Not stay in such a solitary Home.

Pop.

30 Nero, Emperor of Rome.

Pop. What unknown Guests are these that tear my Breast?

Like Slaves in golden Mines they dig their Way:
A Crown they shew, which my frail Heart adores;
Before my Thoughts a Royal Scepter flies,
At which my Fancy grasps; but when it comes,
And its bright Glories offers to my Hand,
I fain would reach, and yet refuse to hold.

Pet. Madam, consider 'tis a mighty Proffer;
'Tis not this Province, or that Colony;
He gives you all: All is a Gift so great,
As none but *Jove* to *Cæsar* can bestow.
What is it deters you from Happiness?

Pop. Oh, I am lost in Honour's Labyrinth.
No Clew to guide me, but my own Desire,
And that would lead me out, but knows not how.

Pis. Oh Heaven, what will this Earth come to! Was
it for this my noble Brother was sent for in so much
Haste? And is it for this he harbours that Viper in our
House, to tear his Darling hence, and eat his Heart
out? O Laws of Hospitality, why are you sacred? Why
is my Hand so backward to punish that Ravisher of our
Honour?

Methinks I see that Genius of our House
Start from his Monument, and stalk along
Shaking with pannick Fears, and with an Eye
That darts its poison'd Beams of Indignation
At me: Methinks I see him chide my slow
Revenge.

Pop. My Brother has lost his Senses.

Pis. I would I had, and with them lost my Life,
So thou couldst find thy Honour: Oh thy Honour!
More worth than all that golden Pageantry,
High Tops of Fortune, glorious Pinnacles,
And Heaven knows what, that swim in thy fond Fancy
Those wanton Sepulchres have swallow'd it:
Thy Eyes, those Graves of Nobleness and Glory.
I've known the Time, when, had I look'd but thus,
Thus curiously upon thee, strait a Blush
Would mount into thy Cheek? there's nothing now
But pale Dishonour. Priethee do not speak,

Thy Words are pestilent, the blasting Issue
Of a corrupted Heart, diseas'd, and deadly.

Pop. How should he know this? Sure he overheard
Petronius talking with me; it must be so.

But pray, why is't a Sin to go to Court?
I am not guilty of one wicked Thought,
And yet you make me a most wretched Creature.

Pis. Indeed thou art a sinful wretched Creature:
Thou art the wretched'st Thing I ever saw;
Thy Blood is all o'fire, the Emperor,
That Dog-Star has inflam'd it; I pity thee.
O that my Tears could make thy Heart relent,
Or quench those Fires that will devour thee:
Then I would drein those crystal Sources dry;
Rivers I'd weep, and long luxuriant Streams,
My Eyes should play the Wantons, not thy Way.
If thou hast any Sense of Shame, look back;
Thy Feet upon the Brink of Ruin stand,
But one Step more, and thou art lost for ever.
Glorious Destruction, glittering Miseries
Will keep thee waking till Death close thy Eyes. [*Waps.*]

Pet. Fy, fy, my Lord; were your Surmises true,
This is too much, it shews unmanly.

Pis. Ha!
It will not be; rather than suffer this,
Let me be ever branded, base and barbarous.
My Rage is kindled, and I'll bear no more;
Be gone, thou Monster, fly, thou Harpy, fly,
But on thy Wings of Horror, and be gone.
Or, by my Honour, were this House a Temple,
Thy base black Blood should stain the sacred Floor.

[*Exeunt Petro, and Poppea smiling on him.*]

Pis. I am troubled; yet there is one Way left:
Revenge, Revenge! O thou art sweet and lovely!
I'll go to Rome, and with wrong'd *Otho* join.

What means this Noise? [*Trumpets sound.*]

[*Servants running over the Stage.*]

[*Within. The Emperor, the Emperor!*]

Plau. The Emperor, my Lord, is come in Person
hither.

Pis. Ha! is it so? then all fond Hopes farewell;
Heavens be his Welcome. O, I am mad.

This Night he whores my Sister. Hell, hear my Prayer!
 Despair, Revenge, and Murder, come along;
 Bring all your curst Crew, and come along:
 In fatal Business I'll employ you all,
 With this sole Arm Heaven's Vengeance I'll forestal:
 An Act so great pale *Brutus* shall desire
 To see, *Cato* and *Cassius* shall admire.
 Start not, my Soul, but do't; *Poppea* dies,
 My Anger's Victim, Honour's Sacrifice.
 Her Beauties, so ador'd, so much admir'd,
 With Pride and sensual Pleasure so inspir'd,
 Shall in a Moment sicken, fade, and fall;
 Like the North Wind, I'll rush and blast you all.
Nero, prepare; for whensoever I come,
 Immortal as thou art, I bring thy Doom.
 I'll make that Cedar tremble like a Reed;
Nero shall die; that vaunting God shall bleed. [Exit,

The SCENE changes.

*After a Song, the Emperor comes in royally attended,
 bowing to Poppea, &c. Petronius.*

Ner. Model of Heaven, thou Ornament of Earth,
 Propitious Star that smiles on human Birth!
 Or art thou Goddess of the silver Floods?
 Or the fair heavenly Huntress of these Woods?
 Or art thou *Venus*? *Venus* wants such Fire,
 When by the Graces drest in bright Attire,
 She hastes to meet her noble Warrior's Arms:
Venus, in height of Dalliance, wants such Charms.
 Such Beauty never was by *Paris* seen,
 Such conquering Air, and such majestick Mien.
 O most divine! with Pity bless my Flame.

Pop. Be not deluded, Sir; I mortal am.

Ner. If thou of mortal Seed art born, be mine,
 And I will make thee
 More happy than those Powers we call divine.
 To please thy Sense, and ravish thy soft Powers,
 I'll make such Grottos, Springs, and Royal Bowers,
 As shall transcend the blest *Elysian* Shade,
Tempe's fair Grove, and *Ida's* flowery Head,
 Where the Gods meet and dance in Masquerade.

For Baths, we will *Hydaspes'* Current lave,
Lie close incircled in a golden Wave :
Thou Queen triumphant ; I thy humble Slave.
Lo, at thy Feet, *Nero* himself does lie ;
He that commands the Earth, the Sea, the Sky,
For Love of thee does languish, sigh, and die.

Pop. Is all this true ? Can you do all these Things ?
Good Heaven, what happy Creatures are you Kings !

Ner. If thy Heart bears such Softness as thy Breast,
Then I am happy, then I'm truly blest.
All my dear Joys are treasur'd in those Eyes,
Those kinder Stars, those Suns of Paradise,
Without thy Smiles, alas, I nothing am,
But the poor Shadow of a mighty Name.

Pop. How my Soul's rack'd with Joy and anxious Fear !
Feign I would go, and yet would tarry here.
Whence do these new Desires and Wishes come ?
Feign I would see I know not what, nor whom.
How rarely this King talks ! how far above
My Lord's grave Rules of Duty and of Love !

Ner. About thy Knees, O let me ever grow.

Pop. Why do you weep ?

Ner. My Eyes shall ever flow :

Or, if these tender Sources should decay,
My thawing Soul shall melt itself away.
O stay : I'll follow thus, if you remove,
And hold thee fast with all the Force of Love.

Pop. Why is my Heart in its Resolves so slow ?
Like a fond Child, when two gay Things you show,
With wandering Eyes it looks, does leap, and quake
For both ; yet doubtful, neither can partake.

Heavens ! how he pants ! how his Lips warm my Hand !

Ner. They draw their Heat from this warm Firebrand.

Pet. She yields, she yields ! her Looks her Thoughts
betray,

Greatness is enter'd, and her Soul gives Way.

Follow her still, and let her take no Rest :

She thinks it Pleasure to be so oppress'd.

Pop. What must the Price of all these Pleasures be ?

Nature's choice Offering, Art's Variety

Noisy Shows, and mighty Gallantry !

Ner. The Price of all is but thy gentle Love.
 Secure in Héaven as *Juno* keeps her *Jove*,
 Thou shalt keep me fetter'd in golden Chains ;
 The soft sad Story of my pleasing Pains,
 In Sighs upon thy Bosom I'll relate ;
 Thy Beauty's Creature, thou my Glory's Fate.
 Drawn in a Chair of Gold, emboss'd all o'er
 With their great Images whom we adore,
 On Velvet Floors triumphant thou shalt ride,
 Princes shall run like Pages by thy side :
 The Sun shall from his flaming Seat look down,
 And of the Thunderer ask a brighter Throne,
 While all the Gods do blush
 To see their Art by mortal Wit outdone.

Pop. And will you do all this for Love of me ?
 Are there such Charms in my Society ?

Ner. But one short Night let me your Love enjoy,
 And I next Morning will my Life destroy.

Pop. Indeed you shall not ; that were too severe.
 Nay, if you love me, pray live all the Year.
 For Fancy, I substantial Pleasures reap,
 Is that all ? 'tis very cheap.

Tell me not what my Duty does require ;
 Love mans me now, and shews his sacred Fire :
 To Crowns those mighty Objects I aspire.
 If you dare do as you have said, lead on :
 Pale Piety, adieu ; live here alone,
 While I go taste the Pleasure of a Throne.

Ner. Our Chariots haste : yet stay, I will not go.
 Thou Abstract of all Sweets, thou Melter, Oh
 Gods ! too much Joy has my poor Soul distress,
 Weary'd with Raptures, take it to thy Breast,
 On those soft Globes of Beauty let it rest.
 Kind God of Love, O bring thy Mother's Doves,
 And waft us thro' the calm celestial Groves,
 Surfeiting on each other's Breast we'll stray ;
 When we want Words, and know not what to say,
 With Eyes thus languishing we'll look all Day :
 Now sigh, now smile, or thus infolded lie,
 And all along the Milky Way we'll die.

[Exit

A C



ACT IV. SCENE I.

Nero and Poppea sitting in State.

N E R O.



E T not my Crown and Self thy Wish confine;
Ask what thou wilt; by all the Gods, 'tis thine.
Be studied in't, and I'll applaud thee for't:
Mean while, behold the Pleasures of our Court.
[*Dance, &c.*

Enter Britannicus mad, and Cyara.

Pop O my dread Lord, for these let me implore.
Live, Wretches, and his Excellence adore.

Brit. Stay me not; by the Gods, I'll break your Hold.
So sad a Story *Orpheus* never told,

When his harmonious Sighs pierc'd *Pluto's* Gate;

But I ban Heaven, curse the great Gods and Fate,

And yet I will not speak, the Theme's too stern;

Here Hell itself might witty Horror learn.

Some Whirlwind snatch me headlong thro' the Air,

Wrapt round with Clouds envelop'd in Despair,

That I from Earth may hide this dismal Deed:

Honour is stabb'd, and all the Virtues bleed.

Cyara's fallen, *Octavia* too is gone;

In Death's damp Vaults she wanders all alone:

I saw her Soul dive strangely thro' the Ground,

In her own Blood that Spark of Heaven was drown'd:

Treason against the Gods he did conspire;

O Traitor, worse than he that stole their Fire!

Ner. Who was that Traitor, Prince?

Brit. I know not, Sir,

Unless that Dog that was her Murderer.

Ner. Who was that Dog?

Brit. Why, *Cerberus* I guess;

No Savage else could hurt such Gentleness.

36 Nero, Emperor of Rome.

Such Meekness would wild Panther's Fury charm;
And hungry Lions of their Rage disarm;
Even o'er their Prey it would the Conquest get,
Quell their swoln Hearts and cool their bloody Heat.

Ner. Madman, be gone.

Brit. This Madman is a Prince.

Ner. I say again, forbear this Insolence,
Or thou shalt wish thou wert a Beggar born:
At once thou mov'st my Pity and my Scorn.

Brit. 'Twas you that kill'd my Sister.

Ner. Ha! thou ly'st:

Stand not my Rage; for, if thou dost, thou dy'st.

Brit. Then I will sit, and hear your Thunder roar;
Such humble Shrubs it hurts not, but flies o'er.

Ner. But you shall find for once, 'twill condescend:
I pity thee, and will thy Sorrows end.

Cy. Hold; by the Gods, I do conjure you, stay;
First thro' my Bosom force your bloody Way.
In Policy you ought his Life to spare;
For, if you let him live, Heaven will forbear
To punish you, nor will due Vengeance take;
The just good Gods will spare you for his sake.

Brit. How the Boy prattles! 'tis a pretty Boy!
Cyara's Image! how that damps my Joy!
What mean these two, by such an antick Form?
Here's a soft Calm, and there a blustering Storm:
My Painter so sha'll draw me Day and Night:
Here horrid Darknes stands; there gaudy Light:
There Cruelty like the Red Sea appears;
Here melting Mercy flows in pitying Tears.
Exquisite Emblems! perfect Good and Evil:
A Heaven, a Hell, an Angel, and a Devil.

Ner. If I gaze long I shall my Nature lose:
Midst of my full Career I stop and muse.
Now whence does this unworthy Pause proceed?
Can I repent my Rage? no, he shall bleed.

Cy. Hold, Sir, you cannot strike.

Ner. How? cannot, Boy?

Cy. Alas, I ly'd; I know you can destroy:
You can do all Things, Sir, both drown and burn;
Nay, the whole World to its first Chaos turn.

You are a God to damn, a King to kill :
 You can do all Things, if you had the Will.
 But you are kind, and soft, I know you are ?
 Your Eyes are noble, and delight to spare.
 O Heav'n ! how Men will lye ! nay, now I find
 You have a gentle, great, and godlike Mind.
 The Prince is mad, and you are pleas'd to see't,
 Nay, pardon all ——— O let me kiss your Feet.
 You'll win all Hearts by such kind Acts as these ;
 With my warm Tears I'll bathe your sacred Knees.

Ner. Shall I be branded with the Name of Good ?

Be gone, thou soft Invader of my Blood ;

Mercy and I no Correspondence have ;

Pity's a whining tender-hearted Slave :

Fury I love, because she's bold and brave.

As I scan things, Virtue's the greatest Crime :

Stand off ; or I will pass thro' thee, to him. [*Kills her.*]

Pop. Hold, *Cæsar*, now I take you at your Word ;

If you will keep your Promise, sheathe your Sword.

Ner. 'Twere less to give the World, than let him live ;

Yet your Commands with Joy I do receive.

Brit. What barbarous Hand has done this horrid Deed ?

Oh, my dear Boy, look up ; thou dost not bleed.

Stop, stop, thou bloody Spring ; my Hair perforce

Shall bind thee, and dam up the scarlet Source :

I will my self thy kind Physician be ;

When I was sick thou still wert so to me :

At my Bed-side, strict Watch all Night he'll keep,

And, with his Songs, rock my dull Cares asleep.

His Cheeks are pale ! Roses, look forth again,

And smile for Joy your pretty Rival's slain.

Fate wove thy Thread of Life too fine to last ;

All's lost at once ! O sad ! O desp'rate Cast !

Thus, in my Arms, I'll bear thy Beauties hence ;

No guilty Hand shall touch thy Innocence :

Thus Arm in Arm, we in one Grave will lie ?

Wretched we liv'd, but happy we will die. [*Exit with Cy.*]

Pop. What means my trembling Heart by this Surprize ?

Why do I sigh ? why do these Blushes rise ?

Before my Soul, a mournful Troop appears ;

Hopes stifled in their Birth, starts sudden Fears

Languishing Joys, and solitary Tears !

I love him, 'tis too plain just Heaven has sent
On my Inconstancy this Punishment.

I've gone too far to think of a return;

I must enjoy him: O my Heart does burn!

My Blood boils high, and beats with strange Desires:

'Tis just that Madness mingled with such Fires. *[Exit.*

Ner. Thou hast a Wit; some sudden means contrive.

Pet. Believe me, Sir, this Night he shan't survive.

[Exit Nero, &c.

Solus. Contrivance gives a Mischief gloss——'tis fine:

I ha't —— my Kinsman *Burrhus* fills his Wine;

By Nature bloody——then the pow'ful Charm

Of Gold, a present Gain, no future Harm,

Safe in the Emp'ror's Favour he shall live:

All this well weigh'd, my black Design must thrive.

Nature has not been overkind to me:

Her limber Sons and I cannot agree:

She is my Stepdame; but my Comfort is,

To pay her home, this Night her Darling dies. *[Exit.*

S C E N E II.

Enter Otho, and Piso.

Pis. Yet be advis'd, and let us end this Strife.

Oth. Deny thy Words, and I will spare thy Life.

Pis. Deny my Words? what didst thou ever see
In all my Life, to raise this Thought in thee?

My Nature's hot, provoke me, Sir, no more:

I do pronounce again she is a Whore.

Oth. Blasphemer, Peace; Rage does my Heart-strings
Wert thou my Father, I could not forbear. *(tear)*

Pis. Sir, I dare fight.

Oth. Guard well thy Life.

Pis. I do.

This Sport was ne'er unwelcome until now.
You bleed. *[Fight.*

Oth. No matter, Sir, the Wound's but slight,

Pis. O Brother, hear me, for I will not fight.

Oth. You must.

Pis. I cannot. Heav'ns! what have I done?

Oth. Thou art a Coward: prithee, Boy, be gone.

Pis.

Pis. Curse on my Hand that drew your precious Blood

Poppea is an Angel chaste and good :

I'll flatter you ; I care not what I say,
Rather than still pursue this fatal Fray.

Oth. Now I believe what thou hast said is true ;

My City has done what Anger could not do :

She is false, forsworn, and I am lost,

My Soul is shipwreck'd on its most lov'd Coast ;

By the victorious Mercy I'm undone.

Go, noble Brother, leave this Wretch alone :

My Heart's sick ! your Pardon, pray no more ;

Here I will lie, and my hard Hap deplore.

Pis. Then I will sit for ever by your Side,

Take it not ill if I this Tameness chide,

Stir up your Wrath, let Anger chase away

These fullen Clouds ; Revenge will bring the Day

Again, and make your Honour shine more bright,

While it damns her to Shades of Death and Night.

Oth. Ha ! thou hast wak'd my Soul from its dull Rest ;

Revenge, thou gen'rous Fire, enrich my Breast.

Poppea passes over the Stage.

Glorious Whore ! I'll sink her with a Blow,

She's rotten-ripe for Ruin ; let me go.

Pis. You see her Guards will your Revenge oppose,

And thus, for nothing, we our Lives shall lose,

Oth. Down, down, my swelling Heart ; O I am sad :

Old, my weak Eyes ; this Sight has made me mad :

Pis. Blinded with Rage, our Reason's apt to stray :

But I'll shew the safest Way,

S C E N E III.

Britannicus reading, Poppea enters.

Pop. Musing, and all alone ? *Sylvana*, go,

At the bottom of my Fate I'll quickly know :

My Virtues are dethron'd, and Passions rule ;

Heavens ! my Crimes you have reveng'd at full.

Brit. Is it a Truth ? or does Fame tell us Lyes,

When it reports that the Soul never dies,

But

But mantled fits, and acts in gloomy Shrouds,
 Like *Cynthia*, when she's hem'd with circling Clouds?
 When the soft Partner of our Griefs and Joys,
 With trembling Hands shall close our dying Eyes,
 When in sad sort our Friends shall stand and mourn,
 To see the fatal Torch these Relicts burn,
 Is there an end of Thought? no further Care?
 No Throne of Bliss, nor Caverns of Despair?
 No Dens of Darkness, nor no Seats of Glory?
 Then all our grave Discourse is but a Story,
 Some full-gorg'd Priest, nodding beneath a Shade,
 Tales of *Elysium*, and the dull Pool, made.
 Whither, O whither, go we when we die?
 Why, there where Babes not yet conceiv'd do lie,
 Death's nothing: nothing after Death will fall;
 Time, and dark *Chaos*, will devour us all.

Pop. I come to kill thee, Prince.

Brit. My Boy is dead;

To Heav'n's bright Throne his brighter Soul is fled;
 Yonder he mounts on silver burnish'd Wings;
 Each God immortal Sweets around him flings.
 Now, like a Ship, he cuts the liquid Sky;
 His Rigging's glorious, and his Mast is high,
 Fann'd with cool Winds his golden Colours fly.
 Ha! wilt thou follow him! begin: strike home.

Pop. I say, to kill thee (Prince) I hither come.

Thy Eyes sharp Beams have run quite thro' my Heart,
 And I on thine will thus revenge the Smart.

Brit. Strike, and by Heav'n I'll kiss thee for the Blow
 Be quick, my Blood is black and full of Woe:
 Do me this welcome dangerous Cruelty,
 Fair Murderers, if thou art my Enemy.

Pop. Nay, sure you flatter'd when you term'd me Fair

Brit. If Lillies, Snow, and Light, be such, you are.

Pop. If I am so, this Deed would make me foul,
 And cast eternal Spots upon my Soul,
 Therefore, thou horrid Instrument be gone:
 Without thy Help, alas, I am undone.
 I faint.

Brit. Within my Arms I'll hold thee till
 Thy Soul return, and greedy Death beguile:

In rosy Gales Life thro' her Lips does stream.

Pop. Why did you wake me from this golden Dream?
Oh, I am sick!

Brit. I am contagious sure;
And all that touch me die,

Pop. You are my Cure.

'Tis only in your Power to make me live.

From those lov'd Eyes let me this Balm receive,

Within this Circle let me ever grow.

Brit. Thou Charmer, speak; what wouldst thou have me do?

Pop. Something ——— why, thus to press your Hand,
that's all.

Heav'n how he shakes! why do you tremble Prince?

Cyara's Ghost.

Brit. Ha! what art thou? thou airy Phantasm, hence:

O Gods! it is my Boy; what wouldst thou have?

How cold he looks, just risen from the Grave!

Cya. Go not to Bed, but fly thy Soceress' Arms;

She tempts like *Circe*, and has deadly Charms.

Think on *Cyara*, for she lov'd thee well:

Take heed, beware; thou'rt in the Road to Hell! [*Exit.*

Brit. Stay, I conjure thee stay, leave me not thus,

If thou didst ever love *Brittanicus*,

I'll follow thee along the airy Track,

And mount above the Clouds to fetch thee back. [*Exit.*

Enter Sylvana with a Taper.

Sylva. O Heavens! How do you, Madam; what Success?

Pop. I'll tell thee, killing Woe, and deep Distress,

Thy Arm my Girl; I'll shew thee e're we part

bad things: a troubled Mind, and wounded Heart.

Ah! for my former Peace what would I give?

My Comfort is. this Shame I shan't survive.

O dismal Change! nothing is constant found;

The Gods, with Whirl-winds, drive our Fortunes round.

[*Exeunt.*

S C E N E

S C E N E IV.

Nero sleeping in a Couch, Caligula's Ghost appears.

Ghost. From the infernal Cave, the wide, the low
 Abyfs, the direful Pit of endless Woe,
 On which each God that looks scarce keeps his State,
 But giddy grown, turns and takes hold of Fate,
Caligula, in Vapours wrapt, does come,
Nero, thy Friend, and the sworn Foe of *Rome*.
 Not Hell's more dreadful than these hated Walls ;
 'The *Stygian* Waves, and *Tyrrhene* Water falls,
 Alike with Fear confound my troubled Soul,
 And sprinkle equal Horrors as they roll.
 By Traitors Hands I fell : O that I could,
 For every Drop they shed, spill Seas of Blood :
 Oh Heav'n, I'd do what cannot be exprest !
 With raging Plagues I'd fill each *Roman* Breast ;
 Burn Palaces : like Thunder I would rove,
 Tear the tall Woods, and rend each sacred Grove.
 But oh ! by pow'rful Fate I am confin'd,
 And must not reak the Madness of my Mind,
Nero, act thou what can't be done by me,
 Thy Genius, I, will aid thy Cruelty :
 With my pale Hand I stroak the troubled Sense :
 All Poison Hell contains I do dispense ;
 The Scum of *Lethe*, with *Alecto's* Gall,
Megara's Sweat, shall on thy Vitals fall ;
Erynnis shall about thy Heart-strings twine ;
 Yet all's too little for our great Design.
 Lo, I am warm'd ; see where fierce Envy stands,
 And summons me, by *Pluto's* dread Commands.
 Go on, be mad ; no more, I must be gone,
 And vanish, like the Light when Day is done.

[Exit

Nero Solus,

Where have I been ? thou Dæmon of the Night,
 Return : I'm rack'd with this appalling Sight.

The

The forked Tongues of Furies can't express
 The Rage that burns within me : Sulphur's less ;
 Not Hell itself so full of Dread appears ;
 Not Night, nor darker Death, such Horror wears :
 Not the destructive Force of Wind, and Fire,
 When some great City's Ruin they conspire ;
 Not the devouring Sea, when *Neptune* makes
 The Sea-Gods drunk, and Draughts of Ruin takes.
 Wrong'd Womens Hate, Sword, Famine, Plagues combine ;
 Your Madness trebled cannot equal mine :
 All your faint Emblems of my Fury are :
 No tender Sex, nor Age, my Wrath shall spare.

Enter Drusillus bloody.

What News ? thy Looks declare it to be good ;
 A hasty Joy appears, tho' drest in Blood.

Drus. The Rabble, Sir, with Wine and Rage inspir'd,
 With trait'rous Hands your Palace would have fir'd ;
 Your Guards they did assault ; but we withstood
 Their Heat, and soon allay'd it with their Blood.
 Few Strokes were given ere the base Cowards fled,
 Some Pris'ners are, some 'scap'd, and some are dead.

Ner. Ha ! do they bid me Battle ? they shall die ;
 At their own Weapon I the Slaves defy.
 Nothing but Flames can quench my kindled Ire.
 Blood's not enough ; Fire I'll revenge with Fire.
 Fierce as young *Phaeton* I will return :
 Great *Rome*, the World's Metropolis shall burn.
 On *Tyber's* Flood new Beams I will display,
 And turn black Night into a golden Day.
 The molten Gods sha'n't save their Capitol,
 Temples shall tumble down, gilt Roofs shall fall,
 Bright Ruin with a Noise shall swallow all.

[*Exeunt.*

A C T



ACT V. SCENE I.

Britannicus, Flavius, and Attendants.

BRITANNICUS.



I R E, Fire, I'm all on Flame; fly, my
Friends, fly,
Or I shall blast you; O my Breath is
Brimstone,
My Lungs are Sulphur, my hot Brains boil
o'er;

Or you that needs will stay, let your Eyes run;
If you did ever love this wretched Prince,
Now mourn, now weep. O, I will catch your Tears,
And drink the precious Drops: I burn, I burn;
Fall, fall, you gentle Rills, you melting Show'rs;
Call all the Winds to fan my furious Fires;
Bring the cold North, I'll kiss his out-blown Cheeks,
Upon my flaming Breast I'll lay his Head,
And hug him in my Heart, for he is cold;
With my hot Arms I'll clasp his frosty Limbs,
And twine about him like a wanton Girl.
Oh! oh!

Fla. Can there be Gods, and not Revenge?
Can they behold this noble Copy of
Their own bright Excellence polluted thus,
Thus rent and torn by sacrilegious Hands,
Yet idle sit, and sleep upon their Thrones?
The Voice of Murder's loud as their own Thunder.
Awake, awake, you drousy Deities!
Here is a Sight so pitifully strange,
'Twould melt the *Scythian's* Soul, who stands unmov'd
And sullen at his Mother's Funeral.
When Fame reports this Deed, the rugged *Moor*
Will stand abash'd, and groan to hear it told.
Break, break, my Heart. Oh you great Gods of *Rome*,
Where are you all! Is this my Welcome home?

Brit. Ha! he does weep; nay, prithee do not hide it;
By Heaven, thou art my Friend, lend me thy Store,

My

My Eyes shall pay the Use, trust me, they shall;
 Here in my Bosom lay thy pearly Stock:
 Heav'ns, how he weeps! thou art a Virgin sure,
 Fall, you dear Drops; Oh let me hug thee close;
 My Spirits are quite parch'd up, my Palate's dry;
 Th' *Elysian* Shades are cool; oh, let me die.

Flav. Sir, I am *Flavius*, have you quite forgot me?

Brit. I do remember thee; I lov'd thee well;
 Thou art a noble Youth, the Child of Honour.

Flav. From *France* I come, and bring important News.

Brit. Ha! hold, I'll tell thee News; *Octavia*'s dead,
 She's cold, alas, but I am hot as Fire.

You amiable Floods, where do you stray?

Oh, come and quench me, quench my raging Flames.

Flav. O hear me Heavens; hear me, you just great
 Gods,

If still your Ears are open to our Prayers,
 If yet you hold Commerce with mortal Sighs,
 If yet the Vows of humble Souls are heard,
 Oh now look down, and hear my short Address:

No sort of Sustenance will I receive,
 Nor shall the sparkling Bowl salute my Lips,
 Nor downy Sleep visit my weary Eyes,
 Ere I the Author of this Murder know.

Brit. 'Tis like thee, thou wert always a true Friend,
 In a bright flaming Chariot I'll ascend.

Cyara, Oh *Octavia*, my dear Loves,
 You Queens of Innocence, you spotless Doves,
 Meet me, I come. *Flavius*, nay, prithee nigher;
 Thus, in thy Arms, let me, kind Youth, expire. [*Dies.*]

Flav. Farewel, bright Soul, thou royal Excellence;
 Rare Union; Grandeur join'd with Innocence:
 The Fates of wicked Men are gross and slow;
 Thine mov'd apace——but I forgot my Vow.

Enter Petronius and Burrhus, with Guards.

Bur. 'Tis done, my Lord, ne'er doubt it.

Pet. What is he?

Bur. 'Tis *Flavius* new return'd from *France*, he came
 Just as the Prince had drunk the poison'd Wine.

Pet. That was not quite so well, for he is honest;

but take no notice. Where's the Prince——give way,

How

How came he dead? Charge you speak, answer me.
Lay hold of all, in the Name of the Emperor.

Flav. Hands off, I will declare the Author of
This horrid Murder. Speak, who fill'd his Wine?

Bur. That, Sir, did I.

Flav. Then thou art his Murderer.

Start not, base Villain, black as thou art, the Prince
With his last noble Breath did pardon thee.

Bur. Sir, I was order'd ———

Flav. Ha! is it then a Truth?

Bur. I know not; but——

Flav. Thou ly'st; it is too true.

Guilt and Distraction sit upon thy Brow:

And 'tis as true that thou shalt die for't, Villain. [*Draws.*]

Pet. Hold, Sir; by what Authority dare you do this?

Flav. Why, by the Gods, by Friendship, Justice, all:
I'll answer thee no farther.

Pet. Ha! forbear.

Take him or kill him, Guards, I do command you.

[*Flavius beats down Petronius, and kills Burrhus;
the Guards disarm Flavius.*]

Flav. Pardon, ye Gods, my former Blasphemy;
O you are just, and I adore your Powers.

Now lead me where you please, to Life or Death,
Let me but pay my last Observance here,
My Vow I have perform'd; and thou, dear Prince,
Art in some Part reveng'd. What my poor Power
Could possibly effect, is done; the rest
Belongs unto the Gods.

Pet. Remove the Bodies, and bring him away.

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E II.

Plautus, and Mirmilon.

Plaut. Hear you the News?

Mir. Not I; you seem amaz'd.

Plaut. A Courier from beyond the *Alps* arriv'd,
Reports the *French* are all in Arms, resolv'd
To bring the War ev'n to the Gates of *Rome*;
Fierce *Vindex* heads the Rebels, and all *France*
Contributes largely. This the Emperor hears,
And laughs; slights them, and swears he'll hang 'em all.

The

The People mutiny in every Street,
 Their Tongues are lawless, nay they murmur loud ;
 Some modestly retire to Corners, where
 They curse and damn him, call him Parricide,
 A Burner of their Houses, Friends and Gods.
 So where he comes ; the Lion's rous'd, his Eyes
 Look red with Anger, Lightning flashes in them ;
 What Thunder follows, let's stand by and hear.

Nero, Flavius, and Guards,

Flav. Was't not well done ? I did his Murd'rer kill.

Ner. Know, hardy Fool, he suffer'd by my Will ;
 I hated him, and did his Death contrive :

Now Villain, think how long thou hast to live.

Flav. To live ? Oh, who would live thy Humour's
 Torment worse than blackest Devils have. Slave !

Let Parasites, the Moths of Grandeur, fawn,
 These gilded Canker-worms, Ambition's Spawn ;
 I do despise thee, Tyrant as thou art,

There's nothing great nor manly in thy Heart.

Ner. Are you so hot, I'll alter your fierce Tone :

Plautus, go burn the Villain ; see it done.

Flav. Midst of devouring Flames I will despise

All that the Master Devil thou,

Or the black Crew of lesser Fiends devise.

Thou shalt not hear a Groan till I expire ;

But then I'll shout Defiance from the Fire,

Smile at the Shock of Death, and to the Gods retire.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Petronius.

Pet. Dread Sir, two Messengers who come from *Spain*,

Report that *Galba* does new Wars maintain,

Leads the revolted Troops, and joins with *France* ;

The *Germans* too come in, and all advance

Against your Majesty.

Ner. I'll hear no more : Is *Galba* false ?

Pet. They call him Emperor.

Ner. They do ! but what's the Name without the Power ?

Let him come on, this Arm shall strike him dead,

And snatch his borrow'd Laurels from his Head.

Pet.

48 Nero, Emperor of Rome.

Pet. Your Treasures are consum'd with late Expence,

Ner. His gather'd Sums shall help that Indigence.

Pet. Time flies ; 'tis fit your Wisdom had design'd—

Ner. Do you consult while I my Pleasures mind.

Oh my *Popæa*, where art thou retir'd ?

Never was Blessing

So oft enjoy'd, yet still so much desir'd.

[*Exeunt*]

S C E N E III.

Popæa, Piso, and Otho listening.

Pop. Are they both dead ? *Piso* and *Otho* too ?

Piso. I saw them first oppose the Tyrant's Rage,
With Numbers, scorning Death, they did engage ;
The God of Battles blush'd as he look'd on,
Envyng the just Applause these Heroes won.

Pop. Virtue is still by Violence oppress'd.
How his Eyes sparkle : Pray relate the rest.

Piso. I have my self the doubtful Hazard flood
Of fifteen Battles, plung'd in Waves of Blood,
The dreadful Cast on Fortune's Bank I threw,
Life was my Lot ; yet still in all my view
Of Wounds, of War, of Death, I never saw
Such pleasing Horror, such delightful Awe,
Such mighty Force and Art together laid,
Never was Game of Death so bravely play'd.
At last, Oh that I live such News to tell !

With conqu'ring tir'd, these Sons of Valour fell.

Pop. Oh Power of Love ! his Words my Soul invade
Sure 'tis some God delighting in a Shade :
The Glories of his Eyes, like Stars in Night,
Or mourning Beauties, charm my wounded Sight.
Since Honours are by *Cæsar* round me hurl'd,
Since I am made the Empress of the World,
Since all's my Choice, why do I doubtful stand,
And wish a Pleasure which I may command ?
If when I die I must to Torments go,
'Tis fit no Time be lost ; let Pleasures flow.

Fancy its eager Appetite shall cloy ;

Let Resolution holy Qualms destroy :

Henceforth, what'er I like, I will enjoy.

[*Exit, beckoning*]

Nero, *Emperor of Rome.* 49

Otho solus.

Oth. O Hell! her Crimes thy Horror cannot match;
 e swift, my Sword, her Lust and Life dispatch,
 his Key unlocks all Doors throughout the Court,
 re you so wanton? Yes, you shall have Sport.
 ow I am robb'd of all I ever lov'd?
 y Soul is heavy, and would be remov'd.
 nce she was fair, the softest, sweetest Wife,
 y Heart's lov'd Joy, the Jewel of my Life:
 ad she stood so, how happy had I been?
 ut she is fall'n, and glories in her Sin.
 h! the whole Sex is naught, false and unkind;
 alser than flatt'ring Seas, or fleeting Wind:
 ith panting Hopes and Fears they rack our Breast,
 atch our soft Sleeps, and ravish downy Rest:
 h. they are skill'd, practis'd in Paint and Art,
 nile in our Face, and stab us to the Heart.
 et we see all, think nothing is unspy'd,
 While they like Serpents, on their Bellies glide,
 and leave no Print behind our Search to guide. [*Exit.*]

Enter Poppea, and Piso.

Piso. War is my Mistress; here I am unfit:
 ove's Chaplet misbecomes a Warrior's Head;
 cannot cringe, my Nerves too firm are knit;
 These Limbs ne'er lay upon a filken Bed.
 an you, that are the World's great Empress, tak
 elight in the Embraces of a Slave?

Pop. The Sun for thy lov'd Cheek did Heaven forsake;
 Thy should not I the like Advantage have?
 rom a bright Orb of Glory I'll descend,
 and in thy gloomy Cell make my Abode;
 o more a Slave; henceforth thou art my Friend:
 Cottage has, e'er now, receiv'd a God.

Piso. Whoever knew Night mingle with the Day?

Pop. Nothing agrees with Love so well as Night;
 lsh'd, and in Darkness hid, the Bashful play,
 nd, happy as the Bold, ravish Delight;
 he most obdurate are by Kindness won.
 our Touches charm; nay, why do you withdraw?
 row thus, like a soft Cloud upon the Sun;
 y powerful Flame thy icy Fears will thaw.

Piso.

50 Nero, Emperor of Rome.

Piso. Your Grandeur awes me ; yet, why should I fear
Something there is which my Blood strangely moves ;
I am your Slave : But are we private here ?

Pop. As Hermits in their Cells, or Gods in Groves,

Piso. Why did you name the Gods ? that sacred Sound
The Force of Thunder bears, and turns my Blood :
My Spirits fly low, yet with your Touch rebound,
Like wanton Swallows when they kiss the Flood.

Pop. Such Fears unworthy are my Blood or Throne
Give me a Fancy fix'd to its Delight :
Trembling and Starts, the Fearful well may own ;
The Valiant still refuse a distant Fight.

Enter Otho.

Oth. Here's one that fain would try your mighty Arm
What mean you ? e're the Fight's begun, you start.

Pop. Night, Horror, Death ! Ah, whither shall I fly

Oth. Can you be valiant, and yet fear to die ?

Pop. Thus at your Feet let me one Moment grow ;
A little Respite for my Soul allow.

Repentance seizes on each vital Part,
And serious Grief now clings about my Heart ;
Yet, e're I die, let me my Thoughts declare,
Oh you are wrong, my still lov'd Lord you are :
Your Bed's defil'd, and I am all one Stain ;
But yet my Blood may wash me white again.
By killing me, you only can forgive ;
I am so wicked, that I would not live.
In Pity say this of me, when I'm dead,
She was not easily to Ruin led ;

'Twas not a common Crown her Virtue bought,
But mighty Glory with great Courtship wrought ;
Then she was young :

This, Sir, perhaps, may mitigate my Fault.

Oth. Her cunning Tongue retains its wonted Charm
Peace, Syren, and hold off thy guilty Arms.
I feel a gentle Load drop on my Feet ;
Look, *Piso*, I suspect, but dare not see't.

Piso. Oh do not, Sir : My Eyes by chance did start
And half my Resolution's ta'en away.
She weeps, she weeps : Gods ! who would not admit
To see such Floods rise from a Spring of Fire ?

Oth. Yes, I will see her. O thou false one, speak,
or thou shalt die,

who' with the fatal Stroke my own Heart break.

Look up, seek not to hide thy own Disgrace;

let shew thy fair, thy false, thy once-lov'd Face;

in answer me, what have I ever done,

that thou shouldst use me thus? cease thy vain Moan,

and speak, or practise o'er thy mournful Art,

and sob an Answer. Oh my troubled Heart!

Pop. Yes, I will speak, my noble Lord, I will;

this is but a short Request, be kind, and kill.

Our Words like Daggers thro' my Breast make way;

thousand Deaths you give me by delay.

This one last Look ——— Oh put me out of Pain:

I speak no more;

nor shall my Eyes ever look forth again.

Oth. A mortal Agony invades my Blood;

something now whispers me, she may be good:

and shall we blast young Virtue in the Bud?

An Earthquake's here, in all Confusion tost;

the Disorder too, Revenge is lost.

Pis. Here you shall find it, let me give the Blow.

Oth. Thou art so hasty still.

Pis. And you as slow.

Oth. She ne'er offended thee; I charge you hold.

Pis. His old Love burns again.

Oth. Alas! I'm cold.

Compassion this last Ardency did move;

it was the Effect of Pity, not of Love.

Enter Nero.

Ner. The Empress dying! hold thy bloody Hand.

Pis. If thou wouldst save her Life, I charge thee stand;

the Bound of thy Progression there shall be,

when'er thou stir'st,

she takes a Step to Immortality.

Ner. Shall I be brav'd by a black Dog, a Slave?

Hold, hold:

My Pardon on my Knees humbly thus I crave.

As an Elephant, I cannot bend:

My little Fault let this Submission mend.

Pis.

Piso. You stir'd an Inch : 'tis vain to weep or pray.

Ner. Thou Son of Night, pernicious Creature, stay :
I'th' name of all the Gods, Oh let her live ;

Let me this Bounty on my Knees receive,
And thou, in all my Glories shalt have share ;
Thy footy Hand shall the World's Scepter bear,
And Diamond Wreaths shall round thy Temples mourn
And pearly Threads thy jetty Neck adorn.

Pis. Just as you move my Justice shall proceed :
She shall not die this time, tho' she must bleed.

[Stabs her in the Arm]

Ner. What hast thou done ?

Pis. Not much : Your Posture keep,
And stir not, lest I make a Wound more deep.

Ner. Behold I'm fix'd ; thou art not Human sure,
Oh mighty Love !

'Tis for thy sake I this Disgrace endure.
Hadst thou a generous Soul, thou couldst not see
The Lord o'th' World thus long upon his Knee.

Pis. Like a tall Tree to dull Earth thou shalt grow :
You were a mighty God awhile ago,
And 'tis my Pride to make your Godhead bow.

Ner. I cannot suffer this. Awake, my Soul,
Let haughty Rage all Thoughts of Love controul.

Piso. Nay, then 'tis time : Brother, strike home.

Otho. I have:

May all her Faults be buried in her Grave.

Ner. Hence from my Sight ; the Slaves to Torment bear
Mark me, let them be dying all the Year.

Tortures in this small Book you may explore,
The Rack, the Wheel, *Phalaris'* Bull ; nay more,
With care turn all the bloody Pages o'er :

On fiery brazen Pavements let 'em run,
Their Eye-lids stretch, and let them face the Sun.

'Sdeath, dare you stay ? begone, I will not hear
A Word——what need I thus my Spirits tear ?

My Looks hereafter shall my Mind declare.
Where is the Empress ? bring her to my Bed.

Plaut. The Empress, said you Sir ? Alas ! she is dead.

Ner. Villain, thou ly'st, go pull his Tongue out, haste
I'll see the Roots on't ; fly, h' has spoke his last,
Who answers now ? Statues, by Heaven ! All dull ?

Mir. If she were dead——

Ner. What then, sententious Fool?

She were dead, I would restore her Breath,
And she should live

Wife of herself, spite of the Gods, and Death.

My Power's unlimited, as is their own:

My Smile brings Life, and Death attends my Frown;

My Empire's Bounds Nature alone does make;

The Sun his Lodging in my Sea does take,

The grateful God too owns the mighty Debt,

He draws me down Clouds, and pays me gen'rous Heat.

She were dead!

Farce of your cringing and base Flattery:

Ye Liars all; hence from my Presence fly.

Enter Drusillus.

Drus. Lost and undone! Fly, sacred Sir, you're lost;

Alba is just arriv'd upon our Coast,

With fourscore Thousand strong he beats the Way,

The treacherous Senate too, their Trust betray;

Now all the Streets proclaim him Emperor;

Call you Tyrant, curse your Name and Pow'r [*Exit.*

Mir. Fly, fly, dread Sir! fly from this fatal Ground:

The base *Plebeians* have beset you round.

Petronius, who awhile sustain'd their Heat,

Now all bloody from the Walls retreat.

And Piso from your Guards are freed,

Rome applauds them for this last great Deed. [*Exit.*

Enter Petronius staggering.

Ner. Speak, my true Friend; I'll be advis'd by you,

What more remains in these Extremes to do.

Pet. With faithful Truth, Sir, I have serv'd you long;

Now was the Right, I did myself the Wrong:

Now it matters not, 'twas Loyalty,

As I liv'd, I in your Service die.

My Counsel is, You by your own Hand bleed.

The Senate has by some poor base Death decreed.

That's but a Name, by my Example fall;

No Lakes, nor *Stygian* Frogs; that's all.

[*Dies.*

Ner.

54 Nero, *Emperer of Rome.*

Ner. O Gods! but wherefore nam'd I these feign'd Powers?

The Elements, the Seasons, Days and Hours,
Were always as they are, and will be so,
And Nature her eternal Round will go.
The Gods when we're awake, their Demons keep
At home, and only fright us when we sleep.
I would the utmost know of Destiny,
And therefore, dying, do their Powers defy.
If they have any Thunder, let it come;
I'll stand the heavy Shock, and brave my Doom.
Down all at once — Ha! whence proceeds this Noise

[*Thunder*]

If there be Gods, sure this must be their Voice:
Speak on, talk louder yet; what Shapes are these;
O dismal Scene of Death! my Arteries
Tremble, and Nature sinks beneath her Weight.
I know you all! smile on, thou art my Fate;
What God was't hung thee there? he is my Friend;
By thee he points me out a noble End.

[*Die*]

Otho, Piso, and Attendants.

Oth. 'Tis he, and as it seems by himself slain:
Rome's sacred Genius, now look forth again;
Come from thy Shroud, shew thy majestick Head,
Direct our Joys, the dreadful Tyrant's dead.

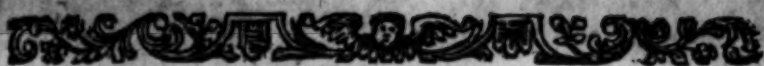
Pis. Let's to the *Forum*, haste, and there proclaim
A mighty Donative in *Galba's* Name.

With all the Pomp o'th' Court his Camp we'll meet,
And his Approach with joyful Shoutings great;
Proclaim him Emperor with Trumpets Sound,
(While he, now made a God, shall scorn the Ground)
And on our Shoulders ride with Laurels crown'd.

[*Exit*]



E P



EPILOGUE,

Spoken by Mr. *HARRIS*.

O *W* dull, how grave, and how precise ye sit,
H *As if ye had acted Love, not tasted Wit.*
When the Trick's done, like Wine unstopp'd
ye pall

After Enjoyment, thus it's with ye all.

Your modish Plays like jaunty Misses shew'd,
Be bravely dress'd, high flown, more fine than good ;

For Clothes attract ye more than Flesh and Blood.

Like cover'd Viands Beauties hid from Sight,

Raise drooping Fancy up to new Delight :

For you Gallants, ye gay brisk witty Men,

He knows your killing Trade, your damning Strain ;

Ye can as well Wenches and Drink refrain.

Yet faith, for my sweet sake be kind To-night,

Or may this heavy Curse upon ye light :

May each Gallant that has an Assignment,

Be jilted after four Hours Expectation ;

Or if the masqued Gentlewoman come,

Spite of long Scarf, may she be dogg'd from home.

May ye —————

In Height of Titillation hear a rapping,

And then the jealous Cuckold take ye napping.



F I N I S.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REPUBLIC

Spoken by Mr. HARRIS.

TO THE
GENTLEMEN OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

My Lords and Gentlemen,
I have the honor to be
informed by the
Honorable Members of
this House, that the
Bill for the better
regulating the
Trade of the
West-India Islands,
has been presented
to the House, and
that the same has
been read twice,
and that the
House has resolved
to take the same
into consideration
to-morrow.

T. HARRIS.

